



Educational  
Tours

Voluntours

# ECUADOR: A Lesson in Conservation

10 or 14 days



In partnership with:  me to we

In support of:



FREE THE CHILDREN

# EF Voluntours

## ECUADOR: A Lesson in Conservation

10 or 14 days

**Ecuador is a country with incredible natural beauty. Home to the Andes mountains and some of the most breathtaking peaks in the world, it's also a place where you'll see some lush bio-diverse rainforests and a vibrant Indigenous culture.**

When travelling to Ecuador on an EF Voluntour, students will help many of the most impoverished Indigenous communities in the country. Working with Me to We Trips in Free The Children communities, students on an EF Voluntour will help give the Indigenous population the resources they need to maintain their traditional lifestyle and thrive in the modern world.





# Country Background

## Official Language

Spanish. However, a significant proportion of Ecuador's Andean population speaks the ancient Incan language of Quechua and a variety of related dialects.

## Education

In Ecuador, education is officially required until the age of fourteen. In practice, however, there is a serious problem with illiteracy, and a high proportion of students drop out of school. This problem is most severe in rural areas where children receive only minimal formal schooling because they have to work on the land. Many families could not survive without the labour their children provide.

## Relationships

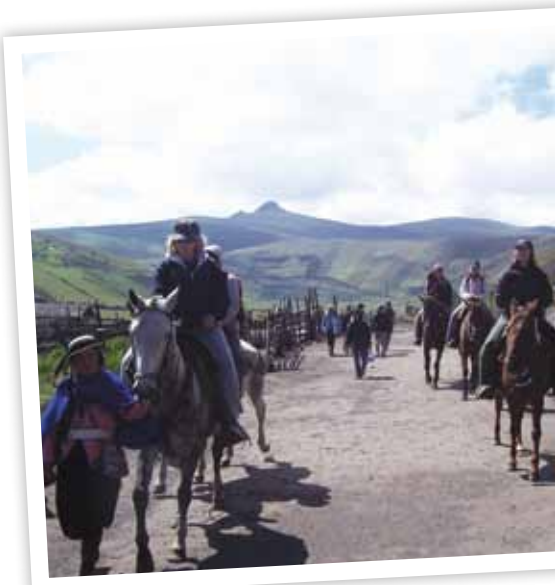
In Ecuador, it is customary for most activity in cities to close down between the hours of 1:00 and 3:00 PM for the afternoon siesta. In Ecuador, people kiss each other's cheek when introduced, except in a business situation where handshakes are more appropriate.

## Food

Ecuador's population has relied on the potato as a staple crop since pre-Inca times. Over one hundred different types of potatoes are still grown throughout the Andes. A traditional Andean specialty is *locro*, a dish of corn and potatoes, topped with a spicy cheese sauce. Seafood is an important part of the diet in coastal areas. A common snack item in Quito is empanadas— small pastries filled with meat, onions, eggs, and olives. Empanadas are sold in bakeries or by street vendors.

## Sports

Spectator sports are popular in Ecuador. As elsewhere in Latin America, soccer is a national pastime. Bullfighting, introduced by the Spanish, is also popular. In some rural villages, a non-violent version of bull-fighting provides entertainment at some fiestas. Local men are invited to jump into a pen with a young bull calf to try their skills as matadors (bullfighters).





### Countries Visited:

Ecuador

### Program Fee Includes:

#### Full-time Facilitators

**Transportation:** Round-trip flight • All transportation within Ecuador

**Accommodations:** Community-developed and community-operated tourism projects in the Andes Mountains fully equipped with separate bunk bed accommodations for males and females

**Meals:** All meals while in Ecuador

**Sightseeing tours (2):** Quito • Mitad del Mundo

**Visits to special attractions (3):** Rose factory • Free The Children Schools • Guamote Market

**Also included:** Curriculum materials and training

### Itinerary Highlights:

- Meet Ecuador's Indigenous people to understand the challenges faced by their communities
- Become involved in important community building activities
- Travel to the breathtaking Andes Mountains
- Participate in leadership training and activities

### Day 1: Flight and Arrival in Quito

Leave bright and early for an evening arrival in Quito, the capital city of Ecuador. Your facilitators will meet you at the airport and will be with you for the duration of your stay.

### Day 2: Quito • Mitad del Mundo

**Guided tour of Old Quito** • Learn about Ecuador's rich history by viewing the Plaza Grande which holds the Presidential Palace, Archbishop's Palace, Municipal Government building and the Hotel Plaza Grande – Quito's finest hotel and the original home of Juan Diaz de Hidalgo, one of the Spanish conquerors who founded Quito at the beginning of the sixteenth century. You will also have the chance to view La Compania de Jesus: The Jesuit Church. Made entirely of gold leaf, this structure took 160 years to complete.

**Guided tour of Mitad del Mundo** • Enjoy a picnic lunch in a local park, have a short rest or practise some Ecuadorian football! Head to Mitad del Mundo (Middle of the World) to stand directly on the equator. Learn about the history of the Indigenous people in Ecuador and how their belief systems were intricately tied to the moon cycles. There are a few gravity defying tests you will be put up to: does water flush straight down on the equator? You will have to find out for yourself!

### Day 3: Chimborazo Province

**Travel to the Highlands** • Get up bright and early to hit the road! Enjoy breakfast at the hotel and have your bags ready to take to the bus. Notice the change in the landscape as you move from a metropolitan hub into the Andes Mountains. This is a great chance for you to rest up, glance through your Spanish booklet and to take in the sights.

**Tour a rose factory** • The group will take a break midway through at a rose factory located in the Latacunga Valley. The cut flower industry is one of Ecuador's largest exports and this is a great opportunity to get an inside scoop on what may be arriving at your door each Valentine's Day. Eat lunch at a nearby location, and if you're lucky you may have a chance to treat yourself to an ice cream in Salcedo, a town known for their many flavours and quality of ice cream!

**Chimborazo Province** • Take a drive by Mt. Chimborazo, Ecuador's highest peak, as you enter into the Chimborazo province. Sitting at 6312 m above sea level, this peak is technically regarded as the surface furthest away from the centre of the Earth. You will have the opportunity to stop and visit some of Free The Children's first schools built in Ecuador to gain an understanding of the type of work that awaits you. You will have an orientation to the province and communities by your facilitators and local guides to prep you for your first day in the community.

### Day 4: Chimborazo Province

**Community orientation** • Welcoming individuals is an integral part of the Indigenous culture in Ecuador. Head into your host community and don't be surprised if a meeting is hosted by the school students, educators, fathers, and mothers of the community. Preparing a few words to share about your group and why you decided to go on this trip will certainly be of interest to the community. These are communities which have been working alongside the Ministry of Education to provide a bilingual education system for the youth. Spanish will be the common language for both groups to share with one another and will help you seek out the answers to the many questions you may have brewing in your mind.



### Free The Children project building •

Journey back to your lodge for lunch before heading back to the community for a full afternoon of work. Your facilitators will be working hand-in-hand with local staff who will provide oversight on the construction site.

### Day 5: Chimborazo Province

**Visit Guamote Market •** Market day is shopping day, for your host community and all those surrounding it! You will be grouped with a few of your team members to be travel buddies for the morning so that together you can see where clothes, hats, food, animals, tires, and everything in between can be found. This is a great place to pick up souvenirs for family and friends back at home. Fedoras and ponchos galore, plus you'll be supporting the locals. Groups are welcome to try their hand at purchasing a guinea pig for a celebratory dinner later in the week. Believe it or not, guinea pig or cuy (pronounced queue) is a delicacy in the highlands!

**Free The Children project building •** Back at the construction site you will continue working on your project. Rotate jobs to get a feel for all the different components that go into creating a well-built structure. Take time off to play soccer or a game of duck duck goose (pato pato ganzo) with the children in the community.

### Day 6: Chimborazo Province

**Enjoy some sports •** Gather up sports materials and your Spanish book for a day of fun with the youth in the community! Sports and laughter are two languages both our cultures share, and play is something that youth in these areas do not have the opportunity to partake in as much as we do in North America.

**Free The Children project building •** Head back to the lodge for your hot lunch and gear up for another afternoon at the site. See how much progress can be made in just three days when you have a whole workforce focusing on a task together.

### Day 7: Chimborazo Province

**Women's cooperative •** Learn about an important pillar of Free The Children's development model: the alternative income projects. Free The Children has learned that providing the means for education is just not enough, and without proper health care as well as means to gain an income, the barrier to education still exists. Travel to the community of Pulingui Centro; spend the morning with incredible women and learn how they have bonded together to form a Women's Cooperative from Santa Anita. This is a unique opportunity to discuss, one-on-one, the role of women in the Indigenous communities and to try your hand at some of their daily tasks such as sheep shearing, wool cleaning, and knitting. Don't be shy or intimidated by their speediness – they are ready to help you along the way!

**Free The Children project building •** This is your group's final afternoon on project building, and it is always a great time to put your best foot forward and to make the most of it!

Take some time to chat with others about the information you have gained during your stay in Chimborazo, the history of the country, the struggle the Indigenous have endured, and how they work in partnership with Me to We.

### Day 8: Chimborazo Province

**Closing ceremonies •** As important as it is for the Indigenous people to welcome you into their community, it is just as important to say goodbye to the new friends they have made. This is an emotional day and your opportunity to share with the community the sentiments and feelings you have developed during your stay. There may be an opportunity for music and dancing. Return to the lodge for a special celebration to signify the end of your time in Chimborazo.

### Day 9: Quito

**Transfer to Quito •** Once arriving in Quito you will have a chance to visit the Mariscal Market for some final souvenir shopping. This is a tourist market and a great place to get any last minute gifts or items you want to take with you before flying out. Enjoy a final dinner and night in Quito with your group, spend time reflecting on your journey and preparing yourself for your return home.

### Day 10: Return Home

**Departure •** Board your flight and return home.

### EXTENSION

### Day 10: Flight to Galápagos Islands

**Flight to the Galápagos Islands •** Today, fly from Quito to Isla Baltra, arriving amid the ecological paradise of Darwin's famed Galápagos Islands. Park regulations are designed to protect this earthly treasure for future generations.

**Transfer to Santa Cruz Island •** Make the short transfer to Santa Cruz Island, the gateway to the Galápagos.

### Day 11: Galápagos yacht excursion

**Full-day excursion to Bartolomé or Isabella Island •** Journey today via a yacht to one of the most dramatic moonscape scenes in the archipelago, Bartolomé or to Isabella Island. At Bartolomé Island, you will find Pinnacle Rock, the most photographed site of the Galápagos. In addition to the impressive lava formations, which come in red, green and orange, as well as black, the island has two small beaches for snorkeling and swimming.

### Day 12: Galápagos yacht excursion

**Full-day excursion to North Seymour or Floreana Island •** Today you will visit either North Seymour Island or Floreana Island. North Seymour is best known for its extensive population of magnificent frigate birds.

### Day 13: Baltra • Quito

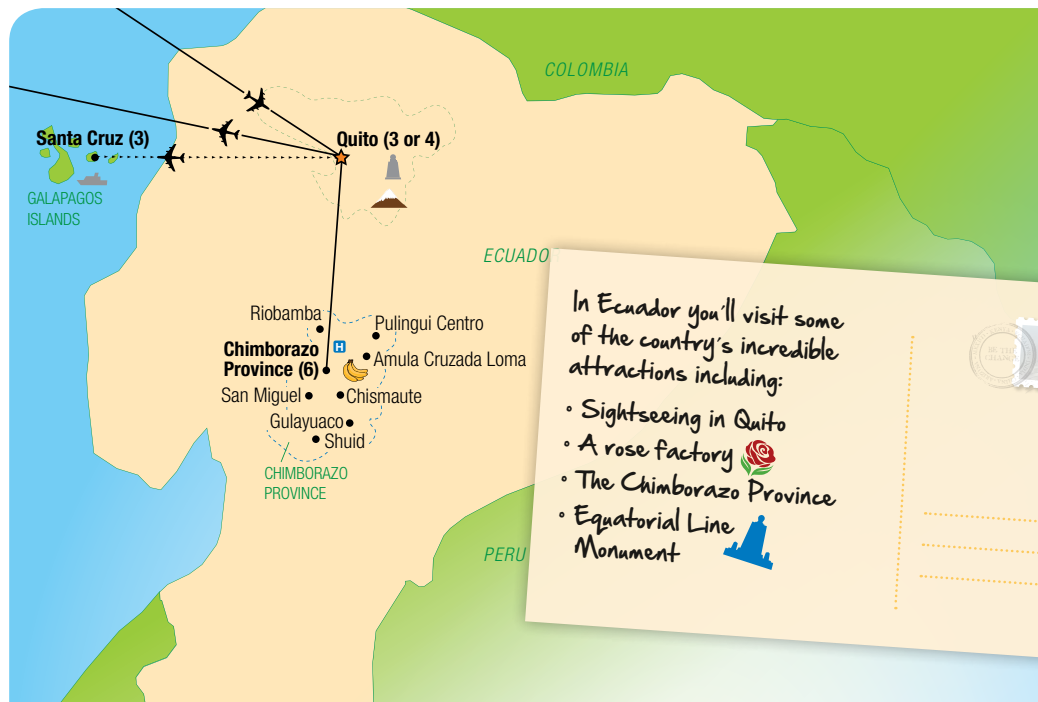
**Transfer to Baltra •** En route back to the airport in Baltra, stop in the highlands of Santa Cruz. Observe the unique and diverse vegetation zones of the area and visit the Twin Craters. The area is also excellent for observing the wild tortoises.

**Flight to Quito •** Board your flight bound for Quito.

### Day 14: Return Home

**Departure •** Transfer to the airport for your return flight home.

**For complete financial and registration details, please refer to the Booking Conditions for EF Voluntours.**



# San Miguel

## Meeting community needs

San Miguel is populated by the Indigenous Puruha people who speak the Quechua language. Historically the Indigenous people of Ecuador have been neglected and discriminated against by the government. The population of the community is approximately 1,570 with 550 children under the age of 18. The literacy rate stands at 40% for women and 70% for men.

### Notable Challenges in San Miguel:

#### EDUCATION

- Only 10% go to secondary school
- Male literacy 70% – female literacy 40%

#### WATER & SANITATION

- Long treks for water
- Child health and mortality

#### HEALTH

- Chronic diarrhea
- Inaccessible health care

#### ALTERNATIVE INCOME

- Seasonal migration inhibits local development
- Limited support for Indigenous education

### Adopt a Village Efforts:

#### EDUCATION

- School-building
- School repairs
- Playgrounds
- Youth leadership programs

#### WATER & SANITATION

- Latrines
- Rain catchment supplement water supply
- Hand washing stations

#### HEALTH

- Kitchens, dining halls
- Gardens
- Tree planting
- Lunch programs

#### ALTERNATIVE INCOME

- Women's groups/lending circles



# Free The Children Villages in Ecuador

EF Voluntours travel to communities populated by Indigenous people in the Chimborazo Province of Ecuador.

**Gulahuayco:** Gulahuayco is an Indigenous community high in the Andes Mountains, in the Chimborazo Province of Ecuador. There are approximately 500 people in Gulahuayco, of which 260 are men and 240 are women. There are 111 students in Gulahuayco; 60 boys and 51 girls. Migration has become a major social challenge in the community; fathers and sons are migrating to cities to find work leaving strains within the community.

**Chismaute:** Chismaute is located in the southern part of Chimborazo province in rural Ecuador. Territorially, it is very large. It takes about 1.5 hours to walk from one side of Chismaute to the other. Each community member owns a small piece of land in the hills, sometimes located beside the house, sometimes 20 minutes away from the house. Many adults in Chismaute were never given the opportunity to gain a formal education and the effects are felt throughout the community.

**Huacona la Merced:** Huacona la Merced is located in the Chimborazo Province of Ecuador. The population of the community is approximately 1,500. Approximately 60 per cent of the population are women. The literacy rate stands at 30 per cent for women and 20 per cent for men. In Huacona la Merced, erosion of land and depletion of productive soil due to heavy rains is a constant concern.



## Mirian's Story

Mirian Cecilia Daquilema is an 11-year-old girl who lives in San Miguel, Chimborazo. Even though she lives only 15 minutes away from the local school, Mirian has only reached Grade 3.

Next year, Mirian will be able to attend school every day. Her parents have realized the importance of education and, with a new school built by Free The Children, there will be enough classrooms and resources to ensure that all the youth of San Miguel have access to education.

# Safety & Security

**Safety and security are the most important priorities at EF and Me to We.**

Ensuring our participants' safety while overseas on an EF Voluntour is our first priority – from the moment a participant steps foot on the plane, to the moment he or she arrives safely at home.

## Experienced Facilitators and Staff

- Facilitators are knowledgeable about the countries to which they travel and have a working knowledge of the local languages.
- All facilitators have up-to-date First Aid certification, carry a comprehensive First Aid kit at all times and have participated in our extensive facilitator training program.
- Participants are always travelling as a group under the guidance of our expert facilitators.
- All transportation is supervised by expert staff.

## Emergency Procedures and Services

- Our extensive facilitator training program includes emergency evacuation protocols, standard operating procedures and crisis prevention/management training from experts.
- In each location we visit, we work in conjunction with Western-trained medical professionals who are on-call to oversee any and all medical needs.
- Local hospitals with excellent medical standards are aware of our trips and prepared to handle any minor or major medical situations that may arise.

## On-site Security

- 24-hour security personnel are with the group of participants at all times and at all of our facilities.

## Open Communication

- All participants are registered with their respective national embassy to ensure accountability in case of emergency.
- Travel advisories are closely monitored by international and country offices.
- Passport numbers, medical and travel insurance, emergency contact information, dietary and medical requirements, are collected well in advance of the trip by our international office staff.
- Satellite phones are used at all times to ensure 24-hour communication between in-country teams and our Canadian office staff.



## In Ecuador, safety measures also include:

### Safety Protocols:

- Travel advisories are monitored by international and country offices
- Quito hospitals work on par with Western hospital standards and are aware of EF Voluntours and the areas to which they travel
- 24-hour security at accommodations in Quito

### Ecuador Team:

- Two on-call doctors while working in rural communities
- Facilitators are familiar with the country; Lead facilitators have working knowledge of Spanish
- Always travel as a group by day



# FAQs and Important Information

## What makes this service trip different?

Here are some highlights as to why EF Voluntours stand apart from the rest:

### Why is the focus on youth leadership?

Participants are mainly young people. We help empower youth so they can change the world.

### Is there direct involvement in development?

Volunteering on an EF Voluntour supports Free The Children and allows educators to introduce development in classroom curriculum before, during and after the trip.

### What is the purpose of leadership training?

The unique training on an EF Voluntour gives participants the tools to create positive change. It enables students to use the experience gained from their trip as a catalyst for social action upon their return home.

### Is there community interaction?

Building strong ties to the communities we're involved with, students often stay in touch with friends in the community they visit. Students always feel welcome and become part of the family.

### What value does the volunteering provide for students?

EF Voluntours give students a new perspective on the world and their place in it.

### Is there social issues education?

Guest speakers, facilitators and in-country staff share their knowledge of the country and the issues it faces through lectures, reflections, informal discussions and cultural experiences.

### Are EF Voluntours customizable?

EF Voluntour itineraries can be tailored to your group's vision and needs, touching on the issues and areas most important to you and your students.

### Why does it cost so much if I am volunteering?

EF keeps the cost of Voluntours as low as possible. However, we often operate in remote locations with little infrastructure. As a result, EF Voluntours can cost more than a location where there is a readily available infrastructure. Fees cover the costs of food, water, accommodation, flights, transport, program coordinators for the communities, and entry to the attractions your group will visit.

## Is a tax receipt available for a volunteer and service trip?

You will not be able to receive a tax receipt for the cost of your trip. In Canada, it is not legal under Canadian Revenue Agency rules to offer a tax receipt for a “service” or a direct benefit, including service or volunteer trips.

## Why should I take my students on an EF Voluntour?

EF firmly believes this trip will change your students’ lives. Their experiences will be so significant, it will change how they shop, vote, what they study, how they consume, what career they choose and how they will raise their own children. They will become ambassadors for a better, more humane world. We feel this trip is a small deposit for a lifetime of social change. We also believe that to truly understand development issues, poverty and child labour, they must be witnessed firsthand. By speaking to students at a school in rural Ecuador, to stepping into a home in the mountains in China, students will gain an invaluable understanding and awareness of the issues affecting children and families around the world.

## Will my students really volunteer on this trip?

Yes! On average your group will spend twenty hours volunteering directly in the community by school building. Your students will play an important role in digging the foundation, placing the bricks to build the walls, mortaring, chiselling and building the trusses for the roof. Don’t worry, you will have local construction workers working alongside you to guide you through the process and safety equipment will always be provided.

## Will our group build an entire school?

From the foundation to the roof, schools take on average 2-3 months to complete. Unfortunately, you will not be able to complete the construction on an entire school but you will play a big part in its construction. Free The Children will be able to keep you updated on the school you helped to build after you leave. Remember, every brick counts!







Educational  
Tours

me to we

**We've stayed true to our mission – to break down barriers of language, culture and geography ever since we first took students abroad in 1965. That experience has made us the most trusted educational tour company in the world.**

*“ My volunteer tour was incredible! Being a part of the school building projects is something that I will always carry with me. Our group also grew into a family on this trip and I can't even begin to describe how strong our connection was with one another and the various communities we visited. ”*

Tina Valuzzi  
Student Traveller

60 Bloor Street West, Suite 501 407 McGill Street, Suite 400  
Toronto, ON M4W 3B8 Montreal, QC H2Y 2G3

**1.877.387.1463**  
**eftours.ca/efvoluntours**

MWEF12 • Itinerary subject to change.

**Seal of approval**

EF is affiliated with a number of professional organizations, including the Association of Canadian Travel Agents (ACTA), the Travel Industry Council of Ontario (TICO #2395858), the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the European Tour Operators Association (ETOA), the Better Business Bureau (BBB), Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA), Office de la protection du consommateur (OPC #702732).

